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Knowledge is Power – The most dangerous situations are always unexpected. Are you prepared for the unexpected?

What if you are home alone and you fall and can not reach a phone for help? What if you become suddenly ill and need immediate help? What if you become unconscious and no one notices you missing for days?

One source of reassurance is a personal emergency response system (PERS) – a home-based emergency alert service that's activated with the push of a remote-control button. When you push the help button, an emergency call center is notified through a home telephone line. Buttons are usually attached to a pendant worn around the neck, a bracelet, a belt clip, or located on a console in the home.

The system is not complicated to use. Imagine two basic parts (1) a base station and (2) a pendant. Some systems offer options like reminder messages, inactivity transmitters, smoke & CO2 detectors.

Just the Facts

Personal Emergency Response System's have three major components: a small radio *transmitter* (a help button carried or worn by the user); a console connected to the user's telephone; and an emergency response center that monitors calls.

When emergency help (medical, fire, or police) is needed, the PERS user presses the transmitter's help button. It sends a radio signal to the console. The console automatically dials one or more pre-selected emergency telephone numbers.

- Transmitters are light-weight, battery-powered devices that are activated by pressing one or two buttons. They can be worn on a chain around the neck or on a wrist band, or they can be carried on a belt or in a pocket. To date, there is only one system on the market that has a speaker and microphone in the pendant
- The console acts as an automatic dialing machine and sends the emergency alert through the phone lines. It works with any private telephone line and generally does not require rewiring.

- Emergency response centers should be a 24/7 monitoring center licensed in the state where you live. The monitoring company should have trained specialists that are trained in EMT response.

Purchasing or Leasing a PERS

A PERS can be purchased or leased. Some hospitals and social service agencies may subsidize fees for low-income users. Purchase prices for a PERS normally range from \$200 to more than \$750. You have to pay an installation fee and a monthly monitoring charge which may cost from \$25 to over \$40 if you purchase the system or lease and monitoring may cost from \$30 to over \$60 depending on the accessories you choose to lease.

Remember, if it sounds too good to be true it probably is not true! Lease agreements can be long-term or lease-to-purchase. Review the contract carefully before signing. Make special note of cancellation clauses, which may require you to pay a cancellation fee or other charges.

Before purchasing or leasing a system, check the unit for defects. Ask to see the warranty and service contract and get any questions resolved. Ask about the repair policy. Find out how to arrange for a replacement or repair if a malfunction occurs.

Before doing business with companies selling PERS, you may want to contact your local consumer protection agency and Better Business Bureau (BBB). Ask if any complaints have been filed against the companies you are considering. Remember, Knowledge is power. Make sure you are an informed consumer.

Sample Checklist

Consider the following suggestions:

- Check out several systems before making a decision.
- Find out if you can use the system with other response centers. For example, can you use the same system if you move?
- Ask about the pricing, features, and servicing of each system and compare costs.
- Make sure the system is easy to use.
- Test the system to make sure it works from every point in and around your home.
- Make sure nothing interferes with transmissions.
- Check with your doctor. Can the device interfere with your pacemaker?
- Read your purchase, rental, or lease agreement carefully before signing.

- Does the monitoring center stay on the line until help arrives?
- What kind of training does the center staff receive?
- What procedures does the center use to test systems in your home?

Is the product U. L. listed?

Investigate the Response Center

You also may want to ask questions about the response center:

- Is the monitoring center available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week?
- What is the average response time?
- What kind of training does the center staff receive?
- What procedures does the center use to test systems in your home? How often are tests conducted?

You must also have a way for emergency personal to get into your home. Companies offer lock boxes to store your house key in and the monitoring company should have the location of the box or lock and the combination to be able for the EMT to get in with out breaking down the door.

These systems are not a substitute for living with the proper living environment such as assisted living or nursing care and having items in the house like grab bars in the bathroom and railings where needed.

A PERS is good for any one who is at risk for falling or that has medical issues like diabetes or heart problems.

A PERS is *NOT* for:

A person with advanced dementia or Alzheimer who may not know to push the PERS button in an emergency. Also, if you are frequently away from home, a cell phone is the best choice for emergency calls, since a PERS button only works through the home phone line.

No matter if you have a PERS system you should always have a Medical Form Filled out with all your information. We will be more then happy to send you out one by mail.